AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Cancel Claim 1-5, 7-11 and 13 without prejudice. Please accept amended Claims 6 and 12 as follows:

1-5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A method of answering an XML query, comprising:

receiving an XML query;

transforming the XML query into a structure-encoded sequence;

searching a virtual suffix tree (ViST) structure using the structure-encoded sequence and returning one or more document IDs,

wherein searching a ViST structure using the structure encoded sequence, comprises:

(a). assuming the query sequence is <q.sub.--1, q.sub.--2, . . . , q_n>;

(b) assigning. i=1,begin=0,end=infinity;

(c) searching a D-Ancestor B+Tree using key q_i, which returns an S-Ancestor B+Tree; and

(d) performing a range search (begin,end) on the S-Ancestor B+Tree, wherein performing the range search comprises:

(e) returning a set of ranges (x.sub.--1,y.sub.--1), . . . , (x_n,y_n);

(f) for each (x_i,y_i) doing (g) and (h);

(g) if (i=n) then performing a range query (x_i,y_i) on the doc-ID index and returning one or more document IDs;

(h) if (i<n) then assigning i=i+1; begin=x_i, end=y_i;

going to (c).

7-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having instructions stored thereon for execution by a processor to perform a method answering an XML query, comprising the steps of:

receiving an XML query;

transforming the XML query into a structure-encoded sequence;

searching a virtual suffix tree (ViST) structure using the structure-encoded sequence and returning one or more document IDs,

wherein searching a ViST structure using the structure encoded sequence, comprises:

(a). assuming the query sequence is <q.sub.--1, q.sub.--2, . . . , q_n>;

(b) assigning. i=1,begin=0,end=infinity;

(c) searching a D-Ancestor B+Tree using key q_i, which returns an S-Ancestor B+Tree; and

(d) performing a range search (begin,end) on the S-Ancestor B+Tree, wherein performing the range search comprises:

(e) returning a set of ranges (x.sub.--1,y.sub.--1), . . . , (x_n,y_n);

(f) for each (x_i,y_i) doing (g) and (h);

(g) if (i=n) then performing a range query (x_i,y_i) on the doc-ID index and returning one or more document IDs;

(h) if (i<n) then assigning i=i+1; begin=x_i, end=y_i;

going to (c).

13. (Cancelled)